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REPORT ON THE TRAINING WORKSHOP ON CENSUS TAKING FOR ENGLISH-SPEAKING AFRICAN COUNTRIES

(Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 5-21 October 1987)

REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP

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A. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

1. Preparations for the workshop

1. The workshop was initially approved in 1982 by the Second Session of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers for inclusion in the 1987 work programme of the Statistics Division of ECA.

2. The preparations for the organization of the workshop started in 1986 and they involved the following activities: Funding arrangements, invitation to countries, communication with agencies expected to collaborate in the workshop and selection of teaching staff.

1.1 Funding arrangements

3. The intention of requesting funding for the workshop from UNFPA-Funded Regional Advisory Service in Demographic Statistics - RAF/84/P01 (formerly RAF/75/P06) - was made known by ECA to UNFPA in July 1983.

4. The serious quest for funding, however, started in October 1986 when the ECA Statistics Division was informed by UNFPA that the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was considering providing assistance in census training programme for Sub-Saharan Africa over a period of five years.

5. The training workshop on census taking for English-speaking countries in Sub-Saharan Africa was therefore included in a set of the proposals submitted to UNFPA in respect of the census training programme. It was envisaged that the training would be organized at three levels, namely, individual country level as well as sub-regional and regional levels. The census taking workshop was to be organized at the regional level for English-speaking countries since a similar workshop had been organized for French-speaking African countries in 1984.

6. Subsequently, the ECA proposals were embodied in a Project Request: RAF/87/P03 - Inter-census Training Programme in Sub-Saharan Africa - by the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD) and submitted to UNFPA for consideration in April 1987. The Project was approved in June 1987 with DTCD as the executing agency and ECA, an associate executing agency mainly with responsibility for regional and sub-regional training programmes.

7. The necessary sub-allotment of funds for training activities expected to be carried out in 1987 was made to ECA in July 1987. It had provision for US$39000.00 for the training workshop on census taking for English-speaking Sub-Saharan African countries.

1.2 Invitation to countries

8. It was envisaged at the outset that the number of participants for the workshop would be about 15 partly for budgetary reasons and also because this was considered the optimal size which would ensure effective control of the class while at the same time ensuring fruitful discussions.

9. The first set of invitations were sent in July 1987 to ten English-speaking Sub-Saharan African countries expected to undertake their population censuses during the period 1988 to 1994. The countries were: Botswana, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

10. The second set of invitations were sent at the beginning of September 1987 when it was realized that the budget could support additional five participants. The countries included were: Ghana, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Swaziland. This latter group of countries comprised mainly those expected to conduct intercensal demographic surveys during the period indicated above.

11. In each case the invitation letter signed by the Executive Secretary, ECA,was sent through the regular official channels and a copy with a covering letter under the signature of the Chief, Statistics Division, ECA sent to the head of the countrys National Statistical Service. In the case of invitations sent in September, advance information in respect of the invitation was also sent to the Statistical Offices concerned by telex.

12. By 31 August 1987 only three of the initial ten countries had sent in the names of their nominees for the workshop. Reminders were therefore sent through United Nations Development Programme Representatives to the National Statistical Services in the countries concerned.

13. However by 1 October 1987 twelve countries had confirmed their participation and had sent in the names of their nominees. Swaziland declined the invitation due to pressure of work and there was no response from Mozambique. Information regarding the participation of The Gambia was received on 6 October and the participant joined the workshop at the start of the second week.

14. Altogether fourteen participants from thirteen countries attended the workshop. Ethiopia was represented by two participants. The list of participants is attached as Annex 2.

1.3 Collaborating organizations

15. The United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD) and the UN Statistical Office assisted in the organization of the workshop by handling the recruitment of a consultant from Statistics Canada for the course.

16. The Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS), Legon, Accra and the Population Division, ECA also collaborated by providing lecturers for the course.

1.4 Teaching staff

17. Staff of ECA Statistics Division, in particular regional advisers of the Censuses and Surveys Advisory Section constituted the main teaching body for the workshop.

18. The need for inputs from other sources was however recognized. Thus assistance was obtained from other agencies to cover selected topics not only to reduce the workload for the Statistics Division but also to make use of specialized expertise.

19. The consultant from Statistics Canada dealt with uses of sampling in censuses, quality control and coverage error evaluation. The lecturer from RIPS covered concepts, definitions and classifications relating to demographic and social items as well as community level variables. He also dealt with enumeration procedures and related laboratory sessions.

20. The topics on major data collection systems, preparation of programme for analysis of census results and analytical techniques for content error evaluation were covered by staff of ECA Population Division. They also collaborated in the teaching and discussion of issues relating to preparation of tabulation and publication programmes as well as publication and dissemination of census results.

2. TRAINING PROGRAMME

2.1 Opening and duration of workshop

21. The workshop was held at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Addis Ababa. It was opened on 5 October 1987 and continued till 21 October 1987. The opening address was given by Mr. M. W. Makramalla, Chief. Socio-economic Research and Planning Division, ECA,who was then the Officer-In-Charge of ECA.

22. Due to flight and other administrative difficulties only seven participants were present at the opening session. The rest joined within a week of the opening day.

2.2 Opening address

23. In the absence of the Executive Secretary, the Officer-In-Charge of ECA gave the opening address and welcomed the participants to the workshop.

24. He noted with satisfaction that the encouragement and support which the United Nations has given since the 1960s had led to significant progress in planning and conducting population and housing censuses in the African region.

25. The attention of the participants was however called to the fact that though statistical and census offices were steadily building up expertise in the area of population censuses, there were still problem areas and the situation had in many instances been aggravated by the high turnover of staff.

26. In this regard, he noted the generous offer made by the Government of Canada through UNFPA to enable a training programme in census-related activities including the training workshop on census taking for English-speaking African countries to be organized and expressed appreciation for the offer.

27. A brief history of the development of the United Nations global and African regional recommendations for population and housing censuses was then traced and it was indicated that the international recommendations were considered relevant to the various census training programmes to be organized.

28. Finally the attention of the participants was called to some of the emerging issues from past population censuses carried out in the region. It was indicated that some of those issues, namely, quality control, uses of sampling in censuses, census evaluation and enumeration procedures would be treated in some detail in the current workshop while for others such as census mapping and data processing specific workshops were being planned.

29. Before declaring the workshop open, the Officer-In-Charge of ECA expressed appreciation for the collaboration of Statistics Canada and RIPS in the workshop.

2.3 Background of participants

30. The workshop was intended for senior staff of statistical/Census Offices who were expected to play active roles in the planning and conduct of population censuses and demographic surveys during the period 1988 to 1994.

31. In the official invitation letter it was requested that each nominee should complete a nomination form which would provide some personal details as well as educational background and professional experience. This was to ensure that participants would derive maximum benefit from the course so that the objective of the workshop would be realized.

32. Due to time constraint and postal delays however only a few completed forms were received prior to the start of the workshop. The rest were received during the first few days of the workshop.

33. A review of the forms shows that all the participants were from Statistical/Census Offices and have been working in census/survey related fields. Further, all of them have had university education and with the exception of one participant, all have had post-graduate training. Nine of them had at least a Masters Degree in demography/population studies.

34. The working experience of the group ranged from four to nine years.

2.4 The workshop timetable

35. A detailed timetable was prepared for the workshop. On the whole the timetable,given in Annex I was adhered to with only minor modifications.

36. The principle used in the design of the timetable was that the discussion of the topics would as far as possible follow the sequence of census operations. In a few instances, though, some changes were made to take into account the availability of lecturers.

37. The training sessions covered a total of 67 hours during 13 working days. The programme comprised lectures, laboratory sessions and discussions. In general about 56 percent of the time was devoted to lectures with some discussions, 24 percent to laboratory exercises (including mock interviews) and 20 percent to discussions of work done during laboratory sessions as well as general discussion of census experiences.

2.5 The laboratories

38. The timetable had provision for six laboratory sessions which enabled participants to do some practical exercises. The topics covered in the laboratories were: census work plan and budget; programme for the analysis of census results; tabulation and publication programmes; questionnaire design and preparation of codes and edit specifications.

39. Initially it was planned that participants would work individually during laboratory sessions and indeed the first laboratory was done on that basis. Subsequent laboratories, however, were done in groups. The participants were divided into four groups. During the laboratory session on questionnaire design, for instance, each group worked on a set of topics. Later the questionnaires of all the groups were used by a small representative group of the participants to design a single questionnaire which was used for the mock interviews and the laboratory on edit specifications.

2.6 Background documents

40. With the exception of the Provisional Timetable - ECA/STAT/TW-PHC/87/INF. 1 and General Information for Participants - ECA/STAT/TW-PHC/87/INF.2, no other document prepared specifically for the workshop, was given to the participants. Indeed lecture notes were prepared by the trainers but these were not given out to participants.

41. Participants were, however, given the Report of the Working Group on Recommendations for the 1990 Round of Population and Housing Censuses in Africa (meeting was convened at ECA, 18 to 22 May 1987) and some of the documents prepared for that meeting. They were intended to be background reading materials. The documents were:

- Review of organizational issues in the planning and execution of censuses.
- Census enumeration procedures including coverage of special population groups.
- Role of cartography in census:
  Pre-enumeration phase.
- Role of cartography in censuses:
  Post-enumeration phase.
- Quality control in census enumeration.

- Use of sampling in censuses.
- Measurement of economic activity in population censuses.
- Data processing: methods and problems of the 1980 round of censuses.
- Analysis of census data.

42. In addition, participants were given Statistical Information Bulletin No. 14 (published by ECA) which contained papers on coverage and content error evaluation in African censuses and surveys as well as Volume 1 and 2 of the Report of the Regional Training Workshop on Demographic Estimates and Projections in Africa (organized in Accra, Ghana 15-29 July 1985).

B. EVALUATION OF WORKSHOP

43. The participants were generally of the view that the overall administrative arrangements were either very good or good but most of them indicated that they did not receive the formal invitation letters early enough to enable them make adequate preparation for participation in the workshop.

44. 79 percent of the participants thought the duration of the workshop was just right. One person was of the view that it was excessive whereas two thought it was inadequate.

45. The timetable was considered by 86 percent to be demanding but bearable. Only 2 persons indicated that it was too demanding.

46. With respect to the content and proceedings of the workshop 71 percent thought the objective had been realized and 29 percent said it had only been partially realized. All the participants however indicated that the general level of presentation was about right. However some of them were of the view that certain topics like tabulation, data processing, sampling, etc were not given enough time. On maintenance of balance between theoretical and practical aspects in the workshop, the majority of participants (about 64 percent) were in agreement.

47. Concerning suggestions of some other topics to have been included in the workshop, about half of the participants made no comments or proposals while the rest considered that all the topics relevant to population census taking were covered. However they also suggested a few additional topics such as documentation and material control, formulation of questions on migration, integration of demographic data in development planning, etc to be covered in the workshop.

48. The participants were also unanimously of the view that the manner of conducting the workshop encouraged participants to ask questions and express their veiws fully. Some of them felt that more fruitful discussions could have taken place, if the participants were informed in advance about the workshop topics enabling them to prepare themselves with relevant background information. One of the participants considered that submission of papers by individual participants on censuses in their respective countries could have provided more ground for mutual interactions and discussions during the course of the workshop. Almost all the participants rated the workshop as very relevant to their work.

49. With regard to problems likely to be encountered in putting into practice the ideas and concepts pertaining to some selected topics discussed in the workshop,the participants indicated a number of problems of diverse nature. The main problems cited regarding enumeration procedures pertain to the enumeration of certain nomads who do not speak to strangers on two days in a week or the women of certain societies who live in Pardah (harem), and the nonavailability of suitably qualified enumeration staff, etc.

50. On the use of sampling there was some concern about the practicability of the recommendations made on this aspect. Some participants were not clear, about the advantages and disadvantages of various sampling plans outlined and on the choice of built-in versus post-enumeration sample surveys.

51. Regarding implementation of quality control measures at various stages of census operations about 43 percent of the participants pointed out certain problems mainly concerning qualitative inadequacies of staff and materials used in the enumeration, administrative weakness in the process of execution of quality controls, lack of seriousness on the part of supervisors almost at all levels, difficulties in carrying out field checks, etc.

52. As was expected, data processing was considered to be the most problematic of all the census activities. As many as 10 of the 14 participants indicated numerous problems in implementation of this activity. These problems mainly pertain to non availability of trained staff in adequate number, lack of eqiupment, lack of comprehensive edit specifications, non-co-operation of system analysts with the demographers and statisticians in rectifying the errors in the data, etc. Some of the participants experienced difficulties in understanding fully the presentation made on data processing due to their non-familiarity with technical details of the subject and proposed a separate workshop on this topic.

53. On the coverage error evaluation survey and data dissemination about 43 percent of the participants pointed out some problems as foreseen in the implementation of these activities. These problems mainly concern lack of funds and appropriate manpower and waning interest of Government in providing requisite resources after the enumeration.

54. Most of the participants expressed interest in getting further information about the available technical documentation on the various topics which are stated in the following order of preference, i) sampling in censuses, ii) census data analysis, iii) data processing, iv) coverage and content error evaluation, v) quality control, vi) economic activities, vii) fertility, viii) cartographic work, ix) migration surveys, x) questionnaire design, xi) enumeration procedures, xii) coding schemes, xiii) edit specifications, xiv) data dissemination, xv) population and housing census publications of African countries and xvi) journals on population studies.

55. With regard to the requirement of external technical expertise, data processing is considered as the most crucial by the majority of the participants (10) followed by cartography (4), sampling (3), coverage and content error evaluation (3) and analysis and quality control in census enumeration (1 each).

56. Among the given choices of follow-up actions to the workshop, the provision of advisory services was preferred by the majority of participants (8) followed by provision of information on technical documentation (7) and organizing national workshops (5). Also most of the participants expressed desire to have similar workshops organised on the individual topics such as data processing, cartography, sampling, etc at national and sub-regional levels.